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Candidates Halt Their Campaigns

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LOS ANGELES, June 5—The stop-and-start 1968 presidential campaign—buffeted by events more dramatic than any in this century—halted again today in the aftermath of the shooting of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

With Sen. Kennedy immobilized and in "extremely critical" condition with an assassin's bullet in the brain, all the other contenders in both parties declared an indefinite moratorium in their campaigning.

The tenor of the medical bulletins on Sen. Kennedy made it appear extremely unlikely that he could resume his efforts to win the nomination at the Democratic Convention in August, even if his recovery proceeded on the most favorable possible timetable.

Vice President Humphrey and Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy, Kennedy's rivals for the Democratic nomination, cancelled all their political engagements for an indefinite period, as did the two major candidates for the Republican nomination, Richard M. Nixon and Gov.

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Photo by Harry Benson, London Daily Express

Ethel Kennedy pleads with bystanders to move back and give breathing space to her husband as he lies on floor of hotel kitchen corridor after being shot.

Campaign Halted by Opponents

IMPACT, From A1

Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York.

In a statement issued before he left here today to return to Washington, McCarthy said he would "confer with spokesmen for Sen. Kennedy, the President, the Vice President and other political leaders before taking any other political action of any kind."

This was the first time since he began his campaign last November that McCarthy had even hinted at the possibility of a discussion or accommodation with any of his political rivals.

Previous Dramatic Events

None of the year's previous dramatic events—the Vietcong Tet offensive, the withdrawal of President Johnson, the murder of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., or the start of the Paris peace talks—had been viewed by McCarthy as an occasion for reassessing his own position in the campaign.

But he was visibly shaken by the attack on Sen. Kennedy. Some of his aides said they believed that McCarthy was now contemplating some mutual effort with Humphrey on behalf of party and national unity.

They said, however, that no decision would be made on McCarthy's course until the shock of the attempted assassination has subsided, until Sen. Kennedy's condition is known, and until the conversations McCarthy outlined have been conducted.

Appearances Called Off

(In Washington, Humphrey's aides said he not only had cancelled all political appearances but had also asked his supporters in Ohio and Michigan to call off delegate caucuses that had been scheduled for this weekend.

(In both key states supporters of the Vice President had expected to roll up big percentages of the delegates when the caucuses took place.

(Humphrey's press aide, Norman Sherman said the Vice President would be glad to meet McCarthy at McCarthy's convenience. He added that there had been no direct communication between the two candidates.)

Political observers agreed that the most direct effect of the indefinite moratorium will be to strengthen the positions of Humphrey and Nixon, the front-runners for their respective parties' nominations.

Rockefeller Trailing

With Rockefeller trailing far behind Nixon in pledged delegates and only eight weeks remaining until the Republican Convention opens on Aug. 5 in Miami Beach, the Governor can hardly afford a long interruption in his campaign schedule, but he canceled two Washington appearances today that were to have launched a new phase of his efforts.

McCarthy faces a similar — and perhaps even more severe — problem in overcoming Humphrey's long lead in the Democratic race. Having just suffered a double reverse at Sen. Kennedy's hands in Tuesday's California and South Dakota primaries, McCarthy finds himself immobilized at a low point in his campaign.

The danger that some McCarthy strategists had seen in a Kennedy defeat in California—mainly, a rush of undecided delegates to Humphrey —may now be triggered by Sen. Kennedy's violent removal from the campaign.

Delegations like Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois which had held aloof from the choice between Kennedy and Humphrey may now move rapidly into the Vice President's column, these McCarthy strategists fear.

But all these considerations seemed secondary today as the politicians joined the rest of the country in awaiting the medical bulletins.

Danger Always Present

(One official close to Humphrey commented that the danger of assassination is "a thing that any public man has to live with." But he said he was depressed by "the whole tone of the country today."

(This official added that the public seems to be in a mood of fear, that the Nation seems to be turning to the right and that the political beneficiary of such a situation most likely would be Nixon.)